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# Criminality Groups and Substance Abuse

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**CRIMINALITY GROUPS and SUBSTANCE USE**

A Thesis Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of Sociology  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

By

Dana D. Brown

December 2003



CRIMINALITY GROUPS and SUBSTANCE USE

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## **CRIMINALITY GROUPS and SUBSTANCE USE**

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December 2003

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This descriptive study was designed to determine whether substance abusers could be differentially characterized by past involvement in crimes and, further, whether there is a relationship between the type of substance abused and the degree of violence of the crimes committed. By comparing the sociodemographic characteristics, substance-use, and strain-inducing events reported by 598 residential and outpatient treatment seekers in the Kentucky Treatment Outcome and Performance Pilot Studies Enhancement Project, this study provides further understanding of the crime-substance relationship. This study utilized Robert Agnew's 1992 general strain theory. Results suggest that substance addicts and substance users can be characterized in terms of their previous involvement in crime and their perceptions of personal strain.

However, further differentiation between nonviolent and violent criminal offenders and type of substance used is not substantiated by findings presented in this study.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Illegal substance abuse and crime have often been linked in the media and in popular opinion. While it appears that there is a relationship between substance abuse and crime, the criminogenic nature of substance abusers is anything but agreed upon (White, Pandina, and LaGrange 1987). While much discussion has been generated, Hiller, Broome, Knight, and Simpson (2000) report that not enough research has analyzed drug-involved, criminal offenders. To be sure, not every criminal abuses substances; but, given the public outcry for safer communities, the relationship between substance abuse, commonly known as drug abuse, and crime is worthy of examination.

America's leaders and policy makers have invested countless hours and millions of taxpayers' dollars on anti-drug campaigns and stricter substance-abuse laws, such as the "three strikes and you're out" policy. In addition, government officials have also taken a "get tough on crime" position as seen in the adoption of more sophisticated domestic-violence laws and property crime laws (Baldwin's Kentucky revised... 1999). More than ever before, federal and state monies are being appropriated to build

correctional institutions to house the resulting influx of offenders (Bureau of Justice... 2001). While this national effort and media attention are important, the spotlight does not illuminate the fundamental substance-abuse and crime relationship question.

If individuals were incarcerated for criminal acts committed to obtain substances, would not the nation, generally, and the individual, specifically, be better served by instituting more concerted efforts toward addiction treatment? Currently universal substance abuse treatment ideologies focus only on a percentage of the overall drug-related crime-offenders. On the national level, treatment centers unilaterally exclude from treatment those individuals who have committed violent offenses (Administrative Offices of... 2001, p. 6). In addition to disallowing violent offenders entrance into treatment centers, national-level and state-level programs such as the Adult, Juvenile and Family Drug Courts have federal regulations prohibiting eligibility for the violent offender. Although the Drug Court Program takes a holistic (whole and interdependent) approach to dealing with the person in recovery, it cannot be truly holistic considering the violent-offender exclusion. Criminal and legal involvement is one domain that must be addressed. Real-

life issues such as poverty and chronic illness are also problematic for some treatment centers and substance-abuse programs to the extent that all social stressors simply cannot be surmounted due to limited resources (Administrative Offices of... 2001, p. 6).

The purpose of this study was to determine whether substance abusers with a history of violent crimes could be differentially characterized from those with a history of nonviolent crimes or those with no criminal involvement. More specifically, are addicts or drug and alcohol abusers who commit assaults different from addicts or drug users who shoplift? By comparing characteristics of criminally- and not criminally-involved substance abusers, this study provided further understanding of the substance-abuse and crime relationship. Such knowledge, reports Victor Shaw (1999), is necessary to better understand the relationship between drug use and criminal offenders in the adult population. It is hoped that such knowledge will lead to better interventions for treatment.

One of the most clearly applicable theories available for a study of crime, substance abuse, and personal stressful events is Robert Agnew's 1992 general strain theory. This expansion of Robert K. Merton's 1968 classical strain theory seeks to explain individual



delinquency and crime as a result of experiencing strain-inducing events. Strain is defined as the byproduct of an individual's efforts to attain positively valued goals with inadequate means (Agnew 1992).

The data set used in this study comes from the Treatment Outcome and Performance Pilot Studies Enhancement Project (TOPPS II). For the purposes of this study individuals admitted to treatment in the TOPPS II study were divided into three criminal-history groups: individuals entering treatment with violent-criminal involvement, individuals with nonviolent-criminal involvement and those individuals with no criminal involvement. These criminality groups were examined for years of lifetime substance abuse, any self-reported, strain-inducing events experienced and sociodemographic characteristics.

In studying the criminogenic nature of substance and alcohol abusers, this study shed new light on a very important public-service issue. By describing criminality groups, their respective substance-use set, and reported perceptions of stress-inducing events, this study reveals the need for the development of modes of differentiations of criminal involvement groups other than type of substance

abused. On the other hand, perceived strain was a differentiating characteristic.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The notion that substance abusers voluntarily commit crimes in order to finance their use or habit is by no means unusual (Gropper 1984). Given the individual's inability to secure socially acceptable goals through conventional channels the addict might turn to deviant means as a way to "survive" (Agnew 1992). In fact, it has long been believed by the general public that there is a relationship between delinquency, substance abuse, and crime (Gropper 1984). Due to the extensive work of researchers in the field of sociology, psychology, criminology and criminal justice, the relationship between substance abuse and crime is relatively well established (Farabee, Joshi and Anglin 2001, p. 197).

Information on criminal involvement is an important component for influencing the treatment provider's decisions. As mentioned previously, treatment providers unilaterally exclude certain offenders from treatment. Separating offenders into criminal types, or criminality groups, assumes there is some specialization among offenders in the types of crimes they commit. Knowledge about criminal careers has been useful historically in the consideration of whether particular offenders should be

incarcerated as well as the period of time set for that incarceration (Blumstein and Cohen 1987). Empirical knowledge of the typology of criminal offenders has also been beneficial in the realm of punishment and rehabilitation (Blumstein and Cohen 1987).

Although statistical studies have been conducted, a theoretical gap exists when connecting types of criminal involvement of treatment seekers to addiction severities (e.g., Farabee, Joshi, and Anglin 2001; Hien 1998). Several criminological theories do not lend themselves, in their original forms, to filling this gap. For example, those theories that have been sharply criticized for not being adequately grounded in empirical data are strain theories (Bernard 1984).

Robert K. Merton's classical strain theory, published originally in 1938, sought to link crime with social structure. Borrowing from Emile Durkheim's notion of anomie, a state of normlessness, Merton conceived a theory in which individuals are socialized to intrinsically value certain societal goals and legitimate means of achieving these goals but may be thwarted by societal institutions in goal attainments (Merton 1968). More specifically, it is the negative relationships with others that block the individual from attaining positively valued goals.

According to Merton this inadequacy creates strain and anomie for the individual (1968). The fact that legitimate opportunities are disproportionately distributed in a society causes some individuals to seek illegitimate means in an effort to realize their aspirations. This theory views people as fundamentally good and society as the creator of stress, strain, and anomie that encourage them to violate societal norms. The individual who has forgone socially acceptable behavior in favor of illegitimate avenues (i.e., perpetrating a crime and substance abuse) continues to remove himself from society's normative constraints on his or her behavior. The commission of certain criminal acts all but assures this addict will not be accepted into substance abuse treatment programs that by policy discriminate against violent criminal offenders (Noble and Reed 1999). At this time the individual is once again thwarted by institutional policies from achieving the positive societal goal of sobriety.

Due to the heavy criticism leveled against the practicality of empirically testing strain theory, some researchers have chosen to ignore or allocate a lesser meaning to strain variables as an explanation for crime and delinquency (Johnson 1979; Thornberry 1987; Tonry, Ohlin, and Farrington 1991). Other researchers, such as Robert

Agnew, have suggested different directions classical strain theory could explore (Agnew 1985; Bernard 1987).

Robert Agnew (1992), in his paper "Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Crime and Delinquency," argues that strain theory does play a role in explaining the causal origins of crime and delinquency but that the strain models of the past need to be expanded if they are to be empirically relevant. Agnew supported this argument by presenting his general strain theory of crime and delinquency, a theory that minimizes the testability concerns of earlier strain theories.

General strain theory (GST) is a micro level social-psychological philosophy focusing on an individual's intimate social environment, but it has its roots in macro-level sociology (Agnew 1992). GST recognizes three principal types of strain that refer to the negative relationships individuals have with others. The first relationship is one that inhibits the individual in attaining desired goals. This relationship is the one with which classical strain theorists concerned themselves. The second negative relationship is one that eliminates or threatens to eliminate desired stimuli, and the third relationship is one that introduces or threatens to introduce an individual to unwanted or negatively valued

stimuli. Agnew writes that, while these are ideal categories, a researcher should not expect a factor analysis of strain measures to reproduce these categories. They are simply intended to highlight the entire array of strain-inducing events for pragmatic research validity (1992, p. 51).

GST asserts that for every type of strain encountered, an individual will have an adverse reaction demonstrated by differing negative emotions including frustration, dissatisfaction, depression, fear, and anger. In an effort to alleviate these hurtful emotional states an individual may act upon himself or herself or society in such a way as to promote delinquency (Agnew 1992). For example, shoplifters may curtail feelings of frustration by stealing what they otherwise could not afford to buy. Drug addicts may commit income-generating crimes in an effort to secure more drugs. Individuals may continue their problematic substance abuse as a means of escaping their negative affect and/or situation.

General strain theory (GST) offers three fundamental contentions. First, negative relationships with others will increase individual acts of delinquency when strain variables are the only factors. Second, negative relationships with others will have a snowballing effect on

individual criminal behavior, implying that once a threshold has been met, each additional increment of strain will have a greater psychological effect than the last. Third, negative relationships may lead to low social control and an association with other antisocial individuals, thereby solidifying the adverse effects (Agnew 1992).

Using a three-causal model approach Agnew contends that researchers cannot only evaluate the entire spectrum of strain creating events but must also test the empirical importance when evaluating crime and delinquency (1992). Agnew supported this argument by testing certain strain measures, including "negative life events" and "neighborhood problems." Agnew and White found that GST was positively associated with deviance and drug use (Agnew and White 1992, p. 493). Agnew's general strain theory allows for theoretical interpretation of the current study.



## CHAPTER III

### A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Criminality Groups

In efforts to define and classify criminal behaviors, several studies have contributed to the notion of distinguishing different groups (e.g., Ellis 1998; Simon 1997). While very few criminal offenders limit their acts to specific categories (Simon 1997), some empirical data exist that support the notion that veteran offenders do become more specialized as they advance in age (Blumstein, Cohen, Das, and Moitra 1988). It can also be noted that criminality groups can be categorized by the offenses or combination of offenses committed based upon the group's individual preferences (Ellis 1998). A more specific criminal category includes crimes against persons or violent offenses such as assault and robbery and nonviolent offenses that include prostitution and drug offenses (Farabee, Joshi, and Anglin 2001).

There also seem to be recognizable differences between violent and nonviolent criminal offenders. A 1998 study identified characteristics inherent in violent and nonviolent offenders and thereby solidified the two categories. This 1998 study reported that compared to

nonviolent offenders, violent offenders tended to be indigent, residing in the city, male, of African American ancestry, and raised by only one parent (Ellis 1998). The criminality groups, violent and nonviolent, are categories for somewhat specified criminal acts that allow for broader groupings (Farabee, Joshi, and Anglin 2001).

### **Substance Abuse Set**

Individuals who are alcohol abusers are more likely to have no history of criminal involvement as compared to individuals dependent upon cocaine or heroin (Farabee et al. 2001). Previous research has found that cocaine is highly associated with the incidence of violence (Brody 1990; Harrison and Gfroerer 1992; Miller, Gold, and Mahler 1991). In fact, crack cocaine has been a highlighted area of research over the past decade. Some studies reveal that crack cocaine users commit an immense amount of violent crimes (Inciardi 1979, 1992). Compared to alcohol dependence, addiction to cocaine only or both cocaine and heroin is strongly and positively correlated with increased violent and nonviolent specialization (Farabee et al. 2001). However, habitual substance abuse prior to beginning a criminal career reduces the likelihood of engaging in a wide variety of crimes (Farabee et al. 2001, p. 213). Substance abusers develop preferences for

particular drugs or alcohol in their abuse experiences thereby leading to preferential patterns in their criminal behaviors. Other more specific studies have focused on issues relating to the individual's substance abuse set (e.g., Brody 1990; Inciardi 1992; Lipton and Johnson 1998). A study conducted by the Office of National Drug Control Policy showed the results of a survey of American households in 1998; that finding indicated that 77% of this nation's drug users involved marijuana only. Those individuals were employed full or part time, and the researchers further stated that no claims existed that those users were engaged in any other criminal activity. (ONDCP 2001) Individuals who abuse cocaine/crack, amphetamines and marijuana almost always commit property crimes (i.e., non-violent crimes) in order to have the money to obtain their desired substances (Anglin and Perrochet 1998). Thirty-four percent of the federal convictions in 1998 involved marijuana, and another 34% involved powdered or crack cocaine (Ruth and Reitz 2003).

### **Strain Variables**

Significant attention has been paid to the differences in emotional responses to strain perceived by males as compared to females. Males experience strain that leads more frequently to violent and nonviolent (property) crimes while females tend to experience strain that results in self-destructive behaviors such as drug abuse (Broidy and Agnew 1997).

The use of substances and erratic income sources make individuals prone to crime (Shaw 1999). Due to the cost of illicit drugs and an individual's failure to participate in gainful employment, substance abusers, users, and addicts will seek illegal means to obtain drugs (Craddock, Rounds-Bryant, Flynn, and Hubbard 1997). Possessing less than a high school education is not an important predictor of property crime. However, high school dropouts are more likely to engage in violent crime (Harrison and Gfroerer 1992).

### **Sociodemographic Characteristics**

Several studies attempt to illuminate the characteristics of substance abusers and the criminal behaviors in which they engage (e.g., Farabee, Joshi, and Anglin 2001; Hien 1998; Logan, Walker, and Leukefeld 2001). In a 1990 study focusing on narcotic addicted females and

their related criminal behavior, researchers found three categories of crime involvement in which females generally engaged to obtain drugs. The categories include females who show no specialization in criminal behavior, females who tend to engage in prostitution exclusive of other types of nonviolent acts, and females who commit property crimes (Hser, Chou, and Anglin 1990). Hser et al. also noted that the females who commit nonviolent crimes such as shoplifting, forgery, and burglary do so as a means to support and increase their substance abuse habit (1990). This crime specialization may be explained by the normalized negative view some women display towards violence. However, a later study found that lifestyles of female substance-abusers might increase their propensity for committing violent acts (Hien 1998). Some research on female criminality has suggested that women of African-American descent may be more likely to commit violent crimes than women of Caucasian descent (Hill and Crawford 1990; Simpson 1991). Compared to females, males commit more crimes and they tend to be violent in classification (Farabee, Joshi, and Anglin 2001). This finding also points to socialized gender norms relating to violence. While some males do behave violently few men actually

engaged in only violent crimes (Logan, Walker, and Leukefeld 2001).

This assertion is further supported by a 2001 study that found criminal diversity is positively associated with being white and male (Farabee et al.). Another study found minority status to be a significant forecaster for violent crime but also found that a low socioeconomic status is an important predictor that a person might committ property crimes (Harrison and Gfroerer 1992).

Criminal intensity is strongly influenced by the offender's age at the time he or she committed their first criminal offense. There also exists a positive correlation between individual drug and alcohol consumption and the number of criminal acts in which the individual engaged (Blumstein and Cohen 1987). Later studies support the above finding that substance abuse is strongly associated with criminal involvement. However, age is the most important correlate (Harrison and Gfroerer (1992).

Relative to nonviolent crime perpetrators, offenders who began their criminal careers prior to consistent substance abuse are more likely to commit violent crimes. For those committing violent and nonviolent offenses, age is a significant indicator (Farabee et al. 2001).

Perceived religious affiliation was included in this study as it relates to the participant's descriptive narrative but not as a testable hypothesis. Religious preference was highlighted to better describe the sample population. A comprehensive review of the available literature has failed to provide significant empirical research concerning religious affiliation as it relates to adults in the defined criminality groups and substance abuse set. To address this lack of data, the present research will include an analysis of the respondents' religious affiliation.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODS

Participants for this study were recruited into a project supported by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) through a sponsored cooperative agreement project called the *Treatment Outcomes and Performance Pilot Studies Enhancement* (TOPPS II). These participants were gathered from a population of substance abusers admitted to publicly funded treatment programs in three Kentucky mental health regions: Adanta, LifeSkills, and Kentucky River. The treatment programs offer a range of services as regional substance-abuse, mental health, and mental-retardation providers. Between November 15, 1999 and January 31, 2001 trained data collectors gathered data in face-to-face interviews. They used a structured questionnaire in three regions of Kentucky (N=604): Eastern Kentucky (n=206), South Central Kentucky (n=165), both being considered rural, and Western Kentucky (n=233), considered to be more urban. While the majority of subjects (n=199, 85%) from the urban sites were admitted to residential treatment, the majority of subjects from the rural sites were admitted to outpatient (n=273, 74%) treatment facilities (Schoeneberger, Leukefeld, Hiller, Godlaski, and Townsend forthcoming).



The current study includes only substance abusers who had completed the *Kentucky Treatment Outcome Study* (KTOS) questionnaire, been admitted to one of the three participating treatment centers, and had agreed to participate in the TOPPS II study. Eligibility was based on having been admitted to substance abuse treatment, being at least 18 years of age, not being admitted for substance-related education purposes only (e.g., DUI), and not being admitted for mental-health or mental-retardation treatment only. Dual diagnoses with substance abuse was an acceptable criterion for eligibility (Shoeneberger et al. forthcoming).

Baseline data were collected in face-to-face structured interviews lasting an average of 30 minutes with a range between 10 and 67 minutes. The baseline questionnaire is referred to as the *Addiction Severity Index lite* (modified). The ASI lite was modified to meet the needs of the CSAT cooperative agreement and includes measures from the full *Addiction Severity Index* (ASI), the TOPPS II Core Data Items, as well as the *Treatment Event Data Set* (TEDS) items. In addition to demographic and other relevant background information, data were collected on the following six domains: medical status, employment, support status, alcohol and other substance abuse, legal

status, family/social status, and psychiatric status.

Locator data were also collected on all subjects

(Shoeneberger et al. forthcoming).

The two major hypotheses for this research are as follows:

1. The type of criminal involvement of treatment seekers is related to types of strain-inducing events experienced such that:

- a. Violent criminal offenders will experience more strain than will nonviolent criminal offenders.
- b. Individuals without a criminal history will experience less strain than individuals involved in crime.

2. The type of criminal involvement of treatment seekers is related to types of substance abuse such that:

- a. Marijuana is more likely to be used by individuals without a criminal history than individuals involved in crime.
- b. Cocaine/crack (any use) is more likely to be used by violent criminals than nonviolent or individuals without a criminal history.
- c. Alcohol (any use) is more likely to be used by violent criminals than nonviolent or individuals without a criminal history.

- d. Opiates (any use) are more likely to be used by nonviolent criminals than violent criminals or individuals without a criminal history.
- e. Methamphetamine (any use) is more likely to be used by violent criminals than nonviolent or individuals without a criminal history.

### **Dependent Variables**

The main dependent variables involve the participant's substance abuse set (i.e., type of drug or alcohol abused). In this study drug and alcohol abuse history is limited to five types of primary substances: alcohol, opiates/analgesics, cocaine/crack, methamphetamine, and marijuana/hashish/ THC. Substance abuse history was examined by looking at the following sets of questions. The questions referred to years of use when the participant used the substance at least three times a week.

"In your lifetime, how many years did you use [substance]?"

- Alcohol (any use at all)
- Non-Prescription Methadone and other Opiates/Analgesics
- Cocaine/Crack
- Methamphetamine
- Marijuana/Hashish/THC

Participant responses were then coded into the dichotomous variable, used or did not use during lifetime. Of the program participants 85.1 percent said they used alcohol while 33.1 percent admitted using nonprescription methadone and other opiates/analgesics. Thirty point three percent of the respondents reported they used cocaine and/or crack and 21 percent said they used methamphetamine at least once in their lifetime. Marijuana/hashish/THC was used by 57.9 percent of the respondents in this research.

### **Strain Variables**

Strain is also an important mediating variable in this research. Individual stressful life-events have been categorized as strain-inducing variables. These strain variables illuminated how the individual felt about the self-reported negatively viewed stimuli. The word satisfied for the purposes of this research was defined to the participants as a general liking of the situation. For the first set of hypotheses, strain is the dependent variable; in the second, it is an independent variable used in the analysis. Strain was examined using the following questions to form a factor weighted summated scale:

- "How troubled or bothered have you been by these medical problems [medical problems experienced in the last 30 days] in the past 30 days?"

The response category for this variable included asking the patient to use the Likert Patient Rating Scale with: 0 = "not at all"; 1 = "Slightly"; 2 = "Moderately"; 3 = "Considerably," and; 4 = "Extremely."

- "Are you satisfied spending your free time [free time spent with either family/spouse, friends, or alone] this way?"

The response categories for this variable included: 0 = "No"; 1 = "Indifferent." and; 2 = "Yes."

- "Have you been satisfied with your usual living arrangements during the past 3 years?"

The response categories for this variable included: 0 = "No"; 1 = "Indifferent," and; 2 = "Yes."

- "How troubled have you been in the last 30 days by family problems?"

The response category for this variable included asking the patient to use the Likert Patient Rating Scale with: 0 = "not at all"; 1 = "Slightly"; 2 = "Moderately"; 3 = "Considerably," and; 4 = "Extremely."

- "How troubled or bothered have you been in the past 30 days by social problems [loneliness, inability to socialize, and dissatisfaction with friends]?"

The response category for this variable included asking the patient to use the Likert Patient Rating Scale with: 0 = "not at all"; 1 = "Slightly"; 2 = "Moderately"; 3 = "Considerably," and; 4 = "Extremely."

The measure of strain was formed using a factor weighted summated scale. After creation the strain scale was cleaned by examining for and removing outliers. This measure ranged from a low of  $-.834$  to a high of  $+ 3.351$  with the average strain being a 0.

### **Independent Variables**

#### **Criminality Groups**

For the purposes of this research, violent crimes include robbery, assault, rape, and homicide/manslaughter. Nonviolent crimes include shoplifting, vandalism, drug possession/ trafficking, forgery, burglary, larceny and prostitution. The variables were included in the total number of arrests for that offense, not just convictions. The questions included formal charges only and did not include juvenile (under age 18) crimes unless they were charged as adults. Subjects were then asked the following question: "How many times in your life have you been

arrested and charged with the following?"

- Shoplifting/Vandalism
- Drug Charges
- Forgery
- Burglary/Larceny/Breaking & Entering
- Prostitution
- Robbery
- Assault
- Rape
- Homicide/Manslaughter

The resulting index is shown in Table 1, and categories range from Group 1 "no criminal involvement" to Group 3 "violent criminal involvement." Subjects in Group 2 had committed "nonviolent only" crimes. The three violence level groups are considered inclusive meaning that an individual who had been charged with at least one violent crime will be included in the violent category only, regardless of any other nonviolent criminal involvement. Of the 604 participants involved in this research 23.5 percent of them reported having been charged with at least one violent crime while 34.4 percent of respondents reported being charged with at least one nonviolent crime. Forty-two point one percent of the research respondents said they had no criminal involvement.

**TABLE 1. Construction of Criminality Group Index (N=604)**

Criminality Group	No Crime	Shoplifting/Vand. Drug charges Forgery Burg./Larc./B&E Prostitution	Robbery Assault Rape Homicide/ Manslght.	Percent of Respondents in Group
No Criminal Involvement Group 1	No	No	No	42.1%
Nonviolent Involvement Group 2	No	Yes	No	34.4%
Violent Involvement Group 3	No	No	Yes	23.5%

### Sociodemographic Characteristics

For the purposes of this current research only four sociodemographic characteristics of the participants were examined. This narrowing of the participant's background-information to gender, age, religious preference, and marital status enabled four control variables to be established. Race was not examined because the number of nonwhites was not statistically adequate. The response categories for the entire sample included White (90.7%), Black or African American (7.9%), American Indian or Alaska Native (1.2%), Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (.8%), and Other (.5%) (Augustino 2002).



### Control Variables

The questions were asked in the following way, with religious preference and marital status recoded into dichotomous variables respectively labeled "religious preference" (1=yes; 0=no) and marital status labeled "married" (1=yes; 0=no):

- "What is your gender?"
- "What is your date of birth?"
- "Do you have a religious preference?"
- "What is your marital status?"

As shown in Table 2, participants in this study were on average 33.4 years old with 72.5 percent being male and 27.5 percent female. When asked about religious affiliations 31.4 percent of the research respondents stated they considered themselves Protestant, 2.8 identified with being Catholic while 20.3 percent fell into the "other" category. Almost half of the participants or 45.4 percent reported that they had no religious preference. Forty-five point four percent of the participants stated that they were married or remarried, 20.3 percent stated they were divorced, widowed, or separated and 45.4 percent responded that they had never married. Of the demographic data collected, 34.1 percent came from the geographic region of Eastern Kentucky and 27.3 percent came from South Central

Kentucky. Both Eastern and South Central Kentucky regions are considered to be rural communities. Thirty-eight point four percent of this study data was collected from participants in the geographic region of Western Kentucky, which is considered more urban than the other two regions.

**Table 2. Characteristics of the Sample (N=604)**

Variable	Mean	Percent
Gender		
Male		72.5%
Female		27.5%
Age (in years)	(33.4)	
Religious Preference		
Protestant		31.4%
Catholic		2.8%
Other		20.3%
None		45.4%
Marital Status		
Married/Remarried		45.4%
Divorced/Widowed/ Separated		20.3%
Never Married		45.4%
Geographic Region		
Eastern Kentucky		34.1%
South Central Kentucky		27.3%
Western Kentucky		38.6%

### **Analytic Procedure**

Data was analyzed using bivariate correlation tables to compare the strain variable to the control variables and

the dependent variables. In addition, analysis-of-covariance was utilized to examine the differences between the groups. When significant differences were found between the groups Sheffe's (1959) post hoc comparison for significant differences between the means tests were performed to identify which groups were significantly different.

## CHAPTER V

### Results

The first set of hypotheses dealt with strain as it applies to individual criminal history. Hypothesis 1a states that violent criminal offenders will experience more strain than will nonviolent criminal offenders. As can be seen from Table 3 there is a significant relationship between strain and violence level category at an alpha level of .05. By looking at the unadjusted mean column in Table 4, it would seem that prior to controlling for other variables the nonviolent group experiences the highest level of strain. However, once gender, age, religious preference, geographic region and marriage status are controlled, (see Table 4 adjusted mean column) we see that individuals in the violent level category experience the highest level of strain.

Hypothesis 1b states that individuals without a criminal history will experience less strain than individuals involved in crime. As previously mentioned there is a significant relationship between violence level and strain and this study's findings illustrate that individuals in the no criminal involvement category do experience less strain than individuals in the nonviolent

crime category. Both Hypotheses 1a and 1b are supported by the data examined. While not part of the hypothesis, it is interesting to note that of the variables included in the analysis gender, region, and the interaction between all of the variables in table one differed significantly on the amount of strain experienced.

**Table 3. Analysis of Covariance Table for Strain Experienced**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
CRIMINALITY GROUP (CG)	11.75	2	5.873	9.584	.000	.033
GENDER	13.11	1	13.11	21.393	.000	.037
AGE CATEGORY (AC)	1.283	1	1.283	2.093	.149	.004
RELIGION	1.604	1	1.604	2.62	.106	.005
REGION	5.17	1	5.17	8.432	.004	.015
MARRIAGE CATEGORY (MC)	.160	1	.160	.261	.610	.000
CG*GENDER*	6.734	3	2.245	3.663	.012	.019
AC*RELIGION*MC						
TOTAL	424.813	565				

**Table 4. Adjusted and Unadjusted Violence Category Means for Strain Experienced**

Criminality Group	Unadjusted M	Adjusted M
No Criminal Involvement	-.4311	-.3339
Nonviolent	-.00668	.000939
Violent	-.1282	.117 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The no criminal involvement subgroup mean is significantly different from this subgroup mean at the  $p < .05$  level.

The second set of hypotheses dealt with types of substance abuse as it applies to individual criminal involvement. Hypothesis 2a states that marijuana is more likely to be used by individuals without a criminal history than individuals involved in crime. As can be seen from

Table 5 there is a significant relationship between marijuana use and violence level category at an alpha level of .05. Looking at Table 6, we see that there is a significant difference between the no criminal involvement subgroup and both criminal involvement subgroups. This finding indicates that individuals in the no criminal involvement and nonviolence level categories are more likely to use marijuana than individuals involved in violent crimes. Hypothesis 2a is not supported by the data analyzed in Tables 5 and 6.

**Table 5. Analysis of Covariance Table for Marijuana Use**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
CRIMINALITY GROUP (CG)	5.952	2	2.98	15.254	.000	.052
GENDER	2.163	1	2.163	11.087	.001	.020
AGE CATEGORY (AC)	5.934	1	5.934	30.416	.000	.052
RELIGION	.03154	1	.03154	.162	.688	.000
REGION	1.460	1	1.460	7.481	.006	.013
MARAGE CATEGORY (MC)	.03227	1	.03227	.165	.684	.000
STRAIN	.483	1	.483	2.475	.116	.004
CG*GENDER*	.657	3	.219	1.122	.340	.006
AC*RELIGION*						
MC*STRAIN						
TOTAL	324.000	566				

**Table 6. Adjusted and Unadjusted Violence Category Means for Marijuana Use**

Criminality Groups	Unadjusted M	Adjusted M
No Criminal Involvement	.371	.454
Nonviolent	.749	.720 <sup>a</sup>
Violent	.634	.579 <sup>ab</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The no criminal involvement subgroup mean is significantly different from this subgroup mean at the  $p < .05$  level.

<sup>b</sup> The no criminal involvement subgroup mean is significantly different from this group the  $p < .05$  level.

Hypothesis 2b states that cocaine/crack is more likely to be used by individuals involved in violent crimes than individuals involved in nonviolent criminal acts or individuals without a criminal history. As can be seen from Table 7 there is a significant relationship between cocaine/crack use and violence level category at an alpha level of .05. By looking at the adjusted mean column in Table 8, it is apparent that there is a significant difference between no criminal involvement and both criminal involvement subgroups. There is no significant difference between nonviolent and violent criminal involvement. This finding does not support the hypothesis that individuals who commit violent crimes are more likely to use cocaine/crack than those who commit only nonviolent crimes or have no history of criminal involvement. The result does, however, show that individuals with a criminal background are more than twice as likely to have used cocaine/crack at least once in their lifetime.

**Table 7. Analysis of Covariance Table for Cocaine/Crack Use**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
CRIMINALITY GROUPS (CG)	5.825	2	2.913	15.025	.000	.051
GENDER	.227	1	.227	1.169	.280	.002
AGE CATEGORY (AC)	.009153	1	.009153	.047	.828	.000
RELIGION	.138	1	.138	.711	.399	.001
REGION	.151	1	.151	.780	.378	.001
MARRIAGE CATEGORY (MC)	.123	1	.123	.634	.426	.001
STRAIN	.01778	1	.01778	.092	.762	.000
CG*GENDER*	.688	3	.229	1.183	.316	.006
AC*RELIGION*MAR						
CAT*STRAIN						
TOTAL	169.000	566				

**Table 8. Adjusted and Unadjusted Violence Category Means for Cocaine/Crack Use**

Criminality Groups	Unadjusted M	Adjusted M
No Criminal Involvement	.140	.154
Nonviolent	.399	.398a
Violent	.401	.382a

<sup>a</sup> The no criminal involvement subgroup mean is significantly different from this subgroup at the  $p < .05$  level.

Hypothesis 2c states that alcohol is more likely to be used by violent criminals than nonviolent or individuals without a criminal history. A significant difference was not found in the violence level groups and the individual's use of alcohol. Looking at Table 9 we see that only the variables gender and age were significant in relation to individual alcohol use.



**Table 9. Analysis of Covariance Table for Alcohol-Number of Years Used in Lifetime**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
CRIMINALITY GROUPS (CG)	74.999	2	37.499	.748	.474	.003
GENDER	737.13	1	737.125	14.711	.000	.030
AGE CATEGORY (AC)	18382.023	1	18382.023	366.866	.000	.439
RELIGION	68.699	1	68.699	1.371	.242	.003
REGION	105.722	1	105.722	2.110	.147	.004
MARRAGE CATEGORY (MC)	43.894	1	43.894	.876	.350	.002
STRAIN	19.265	1	19.265	.384	.536	.001
CG*GENDER*	304.29	3	101.430	2.024	.110	.013
AC*RELIGION*MC*						
STRAIN						
TOTAL	138795	480				

**Table 10. Adjusted and Unadjusted Violence Category Means for Alcohol-Number Years Used During Lifetime**

Criminality Groups	Unadjusted M	Adjusted M
No Criminal Involvement	14.50	13.793
Nonviolent	13.34	14.48
Violent	14.36	15.04

Hypothesis 2d states that nonviolent criminals are more likely to use opiates than individuals who commit violent crimes or individuals who have no criminal involvement. The numbers in Table 11 show significance at an alpha level of .05 for violence level and opiate use. Further examination of the adjusted means in Table 12 indicate that the significance lies between no criminal involvement and both criminal involvement subgroups. There is no significant difference between nonviolent and violent criminal involvement. This finding does not support

the hypothesis that individuals who commit nonviolent crimes are more likely to use opiates than those who commit only violent crimes or possess no criminal history. It is interesting to note that of the other variables included in the analysis region and opiate use are the only ones significantly related.

**Table 11. Analysis of Covariance Table for Opiate Use**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
CRIMINALITY GROUPS (CG)	2.812	2	1.406	6.626	.001	.023
GENDER	.191	1	.191	.899	.343	.002
AGE CATEGORY (AC)	.001731	1	.001731	.008	.928	.000
RELIGION	.300	1	.300	1.413	.235	.003
REGION	3.278	1	3.278	15.448	.000	.027
MARRIAGE CATEGORY (MC)	.141	1	.141	.666	.415	.001
STRAIN	.406	1	.406	1.913	.167	.003
CG*GENDER*	.364	3	.121	.572	.634	.003
AC*RELIGION*MC*STRAIN						
TOTAL	186.000	566				

**Table 12. Adjusted and Unadjusted Violence Category Means for Opiate Use**

Criminality Groups	Unadjusted M	Adjusted M
No Criminal Involvement	.239	.231
Nonviolent	.374	.374 <sup>a</sup>
Violent	.401	.432 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The no criminal involvement subgroup mean is significantly different from this subgroup at the  $p < .05$  level.

Hypothesis 2e states that violent criminals are more likely to use methamphetamine than individuals involved in nonviolent crimes or individuals with no criminal history. As can be seen from Table 13 there is a significant

relationship between methamphetamine use and violence level category at an alpha level of .05. Examination of the adjusted mean column in Table 14 reveals that there is a significant difference between no criminal involvement and both criminal involvement subgroups. There is not a significant difference between nonviolent and violent criminal involvement. This finding does not support the hypothesis that individuals who commit violent crimes are more likely to use methamphetamine than those who commit only nonviolent crimes or have no history of criminal involvement. The result does however show that individuals with a criminal background are twice as likely to have used methamphetamine at least once in their lifetime.

**Table 13. Analysis of Covariance Table for Methamphetamine Use**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
CRIMINALITY GROUPS (CG)	1.764	2	.882	6.055	.003	.021
GENDER	.003655	1	.003655	.025	.874	.000
AGE CATEGORY (AC)	.05304	1	.05304	.364	.546	.001
RELIGION	.525	1	.525	3.605	.058	.006
REGION	.840	1	.840	5.768	.017	.010
MARRIAGE CATEGORY (MC)	.489	1	.489	3.356	.068	.006
STRAIN	.328	1	.328	2.251	.134	.004
CG*GENDER*	.203	3	.06750	.463	.708	.003
AC*RELIGION*MC*STRAIN						
TOTAL	109.000	566				

**Table 14. Adjusted and Unadjusted Violence Categories Mean for Methamphetamine Use**

Criminality Groups	Unadjusted M	Adjusted M
No Criminal Involvement	.08597	.112
Nonviolent	.2463	.236 <sup>a</sup>
Violent	.2817	.249 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The no criminal involvement subgroup mean is significantly different from this subgroup at the  $p < .05$  level.

## CHAPTER VI

### Conclusion

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine whether substance abusers with a history of violent crimes could be differentially characterized from those with a history of nonviolent crimes or those with no criminal involvement. The question put forward was whether substance abusers who committed violent crimes differed from substance abusers who committed nonviolent crimes. The first two research hypotheses asserted that violent criminal offenders experience more strain than nonviolent criminal offenders and individuals without a criminal history experience less strain than individuals involved in crime. The next six research hypothesis were as follows: marijuana is more likely to be used by individuals without a criminal history than individuals involved in crime, cocaine/crack (any use) is more likely to be used by violent criminals than nonviolent or individuals without a criminal history, alcohol (any use) is more likely to be used by violent criminals than nonviolent or individuals without a criminal history, opiates (any use) are more likely to be used by nonviolent criminals than violent criminals or individuals without a criminal history, and methamphetamine (any use) is more likely to be used by

violent criminals than nonviolent or individuals without a criminal history.

The results of this study suggest that substance abusers can be characterized in terms of their previous involvement in crime. However, further differentiation between nonviolent and violent criminal offenders and substance type used is not possible. Analyses did reveal that substance abusers involved in violent crimes experienced the highest number of strain-causing events compared to the individuals who participated in nonviolent crimes or possessed no criminal history. The strain variables included in this study were not significant indicators as to the type of substance abused by the participants. Substance abusers who committed nonviolent crimes or had no criminal history were more likely to use marijuana while participants who used cocaine/crack were over twice as likely to have a criminal background. It is interesting to note that no significant relationship was found between the use of alcohol and criminal or non-criminal involvement. Opiate users were more likely to have had a criminal background and methamphetamine users were twice as likely to have committed a crime.

Of the five specific drug types included in the study only marijuana was more likely to be used by individuals who either had no criminal history or had committed only nonviolent crimes. Substance abusers who committed crimes, both nonviolent and violent, used all other substance types with the exception of alcohol.

Though few significant differences between criminal involvement categories were recognized, caution is required when attempting to generalize the findings of this study to the population as a whole. The sample data were gathered specifically for the geographical area and not intended to represent a cross section of the nation. Though a limitation of this study, future efforts should include attaining viable time measurements that could connect inception of drug use and criminal behavior. Other limitations of this study included issues related to the inherent nature of utilizing secondary data.

The results of this study indicate that there is not a significant difference between the two criminal-involvement groups based on type of substance abused. The results further identified that the individual stressful life-events or strain-inducing variables included in the analysis did not significantly relate to type of substance abused. Given the fact that both criminal involvement

groups revealed no specialization in type of substance abused, it would seem beneficial to develop treatment ideologies that focused on the actual substance being abused and not the prior criminal history of the treatment seeker. Further, this focus of resources would be better directed to those groups affected by a propensity for abuse of cocaine/crack, opiates, and methamphetamine.

Future research might expand upon the substance-abuse and crime relationship by analyzing whether substance abuse preceded the criminal behavior or visa versa and what strain-inducing events triggered such a connection. By investigating specifically identified triggers for substance abuse and identifying the order of inception into illegal activities, a more specific direction for research may be found. In the end, adding to the body of knowledge illuminating the relationship between criminality and substance abuse should lead to deeper understanding and more effective strategies for prevention and intervention.



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